



State of Louisiana
Office of the Governor
Office of State Inspector General

August 3, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Former Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs
Home Administrator Arrested for Exploitation of
Persons with Infirmities**

Money stolen from patient at Veterans Home

Baton Rouge – On August 2, 2016, Thomas W. Shoemaker of Monroe surrendered on a felony warrant obtained by the Louisiana Office of State Inspector General for Exploitation of Persons with Infirmities and Theft of Assets of a Person who is Aged or Person with a Disability. Shoemaker, 51, was formerly employed by the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs as an Assistant Administrator at the Northeast Louisiana War Veterans Home in Monroe, Louisiana.

OIG began its investigation after receiving information that Shoemaker had misappropriated over \$1,800 of personal funds from resident Roland Matheny after gaining physical control over Mr. Matheny's checkbook and ATM card. Mr. Matheny had been diagnosed with dementia and "severe cognitive impairment." Investigation revealed that Shoemaker paid an outstanding balance of \$1,812.28 on his own credit card account by making a telephone transfer of funds from Mr. Matheny's bank account. Further investigation revealed that Shoemaker used Mr. Matheny's ATM card to make cash withdrawals of \$3,200.00 and retail purchases for another \$1,200.00.

Based on the above, a felony warrant was obtained for one count each of Exploitation of Persons with Infirmities (La. R.S. 14:93.4) and Theft of Assets of a Person who is Aged or Person with a Disability (La. R.S. 14:67.21). The matter is

being prosecuted by the Ouachita Parish District Attorney's Office. (See attached for further details).

Louisiana Inspector General Stephen Street said, "Those with infirmities are some of the most vulnerable members of society. Those who exploit them for personal gain ought to face criminal consequences, and we at OIG will continue to do everything possible to make sure that happens. I want to thank Secretary Strickland and his staff for their continued cooperation during our investigation, and District Attorney Jerry Jones and his staff for their prompt and professional attention to this matter."

Joey Strickland, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs, stated, "I thank the Office of State Inspector General for their continued diligence and professionalism throughout the investigation into the allegations of misconduct by a former employee at the Northeast Louisiana Veterans Home in Monroe. As Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs, I have given clear guidance that misconduct or criminal behavior by any employee of this Department will not be tolerated. We will continue to move forward and to address any issues that may arise while we continue to deliver valuable services, in a professional and steadfast way, to our Louisiana veterans and their families."

Former veteran hospital admin arrested



[Bonnie Bolden](mailto:bbolden@thenewsstar.com), bbolden@thenewsstar.com 12:52 p.m. CDT August 4, 2016



(Photo: Courtesy OPSO)

A former assistant administrator for the Northeast Louisiana War Veterans Home is accused of stealing assets from an infirm resident.

Thomas Wilbrun Shoemaker, 51, of Monroe is charged with exploitation of the infirmed and theft of the assets of an aged person or disabled person.

According to court documents, Shoemaker was employed at the home from February 2004 until February 2013.

The victim, Roland Matheny, was a resident from January 1997 until his death in October 2012. According to his obituary, he was a decorated U.S. Army veteran who served three tours of duty in Vietnam. Medical records referenced court documents state that he suffered from several ailments, including dementia and encephalopathy and had "severe cognitive impairment" in May and September 2012.

The exploitation charge is tied to approximately \$4,400 being used on the patient's ATM card without his consent, and the theft of assets charge is tied to approximately \$1,500 in funds being obtained.

Joey Strickland, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs, stated, " I thank the Office of State Inspector General for their continued diligence and professionalism throughout the investigation into the allegations of misconduct by a former employee at the Northeast Louisiana Veterans Home in Monroe. As Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs, I have given clear guidance that misconduct or criminal behavior by any employee of this department will not be tolerated. We will continue to move forward and to address any issues that may arise while we continue to deliver valuable services, in a professional and steadfast way, to our Louisiana veterans and their families."

Court documents state that the Office of the Inspector General started an investigation after an allegation that Shoemaker misappropriated \$1,812.28 after getting access to Matheny's checkbook and ATM card.

An in-house financial account was maintained for Matheny, as was an account at Progressive bank.

According to the investigation, on or about July 26, 2012, Shoemaker told hospital employee Misti Westbrook to write a \$9,000 check from the in-house account and deposit it to Matheny's Progressive account for upcoming funeral expenses. Westbrook wrote the check, which Shoemaker signed. Westbrook deposited with a slip provided by Shoemaker.

Investigators could find no proof that Shoemaker had power of attorney.

Bank records show the deposit was made on July 26.

Kilpatrick Funeral Home records show that on or about Aug. 3, Shoemaker initiated the application for a prepaid funeral plan for Matheny with National Guardian Life Insurance Co. Shoemaker reportedly provided the insurance representative a \$9,000 check drawn on Matheny's Progressive account and asked that the representative hold the check and negotiate at a later date.

On Aug. 6, a phone transaction for \$1,812.28 was made to Orchard Bank for a credit card account in Shoemaker's name.

In October 2012, hospital CFO Karen Evans received a bill from Kilpatrick Funeral Home and found that the \$9,000 had not been used to cover those expenses.

In a July 18, 2016 phone interview, Shoemaker said after being notified of his Miranda rights that he had the checkbook and ATM card from July 2012 until he went on administrative leave in August 2012.

Shoemaker reportedly said he had verbal authorization to move the \$9,000 but had no recollection of the \$1,812.28 transaction or that credit card account.

During the time Shoemaker had access to Matheny's finances, investigators found that approximately \$3,200 in ATM withdrawals and \$1,200 in retail purchases were made.

Shoemakers said all transactions were made at Matheny's instruction and passed on to a number of individuals who he did not name. There was no written documentation provided.

Louisiana Inspector General Stephen Street said, "Those with infirmities are some of the most vulnerable members of society. Those who exploit them for personal gain ought to face criminal consequences, and we at OIG will continue to do everything possible to make sure that happens. I want to thank Secretary Strickland and his staff for their continued cooperation during our investigation, and District Attorney Jerry Jones and his staff for their prompt and professional attention to this matter."

Total bond is \$20,000.

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